

UVM launches new National University Transportation Center

By Jill Fahy
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The University of Vermont outlined plans to address regional and national transportation issues Monday during an unveiling of the campus' National University Transportation Center.

UVM was designated last summer as one of 10 such national centers. A five-year, \$16 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation will help fund the center to help UVM build on its own transportation-related research and develop ways to promote more efficient and environmentally sound transportation policies.

Another \$16 million in matching funds is being raised through private and other public sources.

Some 80 people attended Monday's ceremonial event at Farrell Hall on UVM's Trinity Campus -- the chosen site for the center. Sen. Jim Jeffords, I-Vt., who secured the federal funding for the project, and Maria Cino, acting secretary for the U.S. Department of Transportation, were among the dignitaries in attendance.

UVM President Daniel Fogel addressed the gathering: "We all believe that the work we do here at the University of Vermont's National University Transportation Center, in coordination with other centers around the country, has the potential to prove just as transformative for a whole new era of sustainable transportation as was the launch of the entire interstate highway system just 50 years ago," Fogel said.

The center's funding, in its second year, will pay for research and for additional research scientists, faculty and doctoral and graduate students. The grant will also pay for the center's new director, Lisa Aultman-Hall. Hall works as director of the Connecticut Transportation Institute and will assume her new job at UVM in September.

During the ceremony, Cino toured Farrell Hall's first- and second-floor spaces reserved for the transportation center and the university's Advanced Computer Center. Outfitting the former Trinity College library for center use is estimated to cost \$1.5 million.

Robert Vaughan, UVM's director of capital planning and management, said renovations will be phased in over time. An initial \$600,000 renovation is likely to start this fall and would be completed by the end of the year, Vaughan said.

Aultman-Hall said work this fall will include planning the center's signature projects -- between two and six ventures meant to highlight student involvement and entrepreneurial business partnerships with local, state and national groups. One example might be addressing freight issues for Vermont commerce, UVM officials said.

Whatever projects are chosen, the contributions of UVM students will be central to the center's mission, Aultman-Hall said.

"Sometimes we forget that we're education students and the next generation of transportation folks," she said.

